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# THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE FORUM

## BETWEEN RUSSIA AND GERMANY: EAST CENTRAL EUROPE AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE USSR

PROCEEDINGS OF AN INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE SPONSORED BY  
THE AUSTRIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK,  
THE HARRIMAN INSTITUTE &  
THE INSTITUTE ON EAST CENTRAL EUROPE.  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, SEPTEMBER 29 - OCTOBER 1, 1993.



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# BETWEEN RUSSIA AND GERMANY: EAST CENTRAL EUROPE AFTER THE COLLAPSE OF THE USSR

Alois Mock

*Foreign Minister of Austria*

KEYNOTE ADDRESS DELIVERED AT THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE  
ORGANIZED BY THE AUSTRIAN CULTURAL INSTITUTE OF NEW YORK,  
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COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, SEPTEMBER 29, 1993

When I first read the program of this conference, I immediately said to myself: Do we, really, have to return to the old debate on Central Europe being "sandwiched" between Russia and Germany? Do we, really, have to discuss the fate of the heartlands of Europe as if these were the days of the eighteenth-century partitions of Poland, or of the Holy Alliance that the King of Prussia and the Emperors of Austria and Russia concluded in 1815? Must we continue to apply a theory of international relations that seems more appropriate to the Treaty of Rapallo of 1922, or the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact of 1939 than to the era of the "new Europe"?

I take it that tomorrow's roundtable discussion on geopolitical challenges will be based on the following proposition: "The security concerns of the countries of East Central Europe are overwhelmingly fashioned by the emergence of a powerful, united Germany and the decline in and redefinition of Russia's geopolitical status..." I do not wish to anticipate your forthcoming discussions, but I cannot deny that I find this proposition somewhat perplexing.

Can one, really, suggest that Central Europeans are today worried about the *decline* of Russia's geopolitical status? And can one, seriously, contend

that today's Germany is a major security *concern* for the Central European region? As to this latter question you will, probably, recall the well-known remark of Czech President Vaclav Havel, in early 1990, that "Germany can be as large as she wants to, as long as she stays democratic." But I think that this is only part of the answer.

The nations of Europe had no major difficulty in accepting the reunification of Germany because it took place in a European framework. The very nature of European integration and its institutions were perceived as a reliable guarantee against any return to big power politics; and this conviction was further enhanced by the statesmanship of Chancellor Helmut Kohl. He never left the slightest doubt that the German government is committed to the course prescribed by Thomas Mann: towards a "European Germany," and not towards a "German Europe."

These are no mere words: the Bonn-Paris axis remains the backbone of European integration; and Germany has now also become the prime partner of the countries of East Central Europe in their efforts towards full membership in the European Community. One can, of course, ask oneself what will happen to Germany's staunchly pro-European



line and to Franco-German relations once Chancellor Kohl has left the helm of the German state. It will, certainly, be extremely difficult to find another German head of government of comparable vision and authority. But let us not forget that Germany's attachment to the cause of Europe and the Franco-German relationship have, so far, proved stronger than any change in the domestic policy of either Germany or France. There is no convincing reason whatsoever why a future German leader would leave the path set by Charles de Gaulle and Konrad Adenauer, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing and Helmut Schmidt, as well as François Mitterand and Helmut Kohl, for the alternative destination of a "new Rapallo."

On this point I can only agree with the following comment by the prominent American political scientist Stephen Larrabee:

Rapallo was the product of a particular set of historical circumstances—an alliance of two international pariahs. Today Germany is not an international outcast; it is an integral member of the Atlantic Alliance and the cornerstone of an expanding European Community that is moving towards greater economic and political unity. Bonn is unlikely to put the benefits of this association at risk for the uncertain gains of an alliance with the "new sick man of Europe."

I believe that recent events in Moscow make this judgment even more convincing.

Ladies and gentlemen, you may now, perhaps, ask me: Are you not arguing against the entire experience of Austrian history? What about Winston Churchill's famous statement that the Austro-Hungarian Empire had "afforded a common life to a large number of peoples, none of whom in our times had the strength or vitality to stand by themselves in the face of pressure from a revived Germany or Russia"? And what about Churchill's poignant conclusion that "there is not one of the peoples or provinces that constituted the Empire of the Hapsburgs to whom gaining their independence has not brought the tortures which ancient poets and theologians reserved for the damned"? Does this cruel fate not, once again, point towards some form of Central European "togetherness"?

I do not think that the Central Europe of today needs its own—independent—model of cooperation. It can take advantage of the existing model

called "European integration." Full participation in its central structure, the European Community, is, in reality, the main aim of all Central European reform countries. Those who try to argue for a "Central European alternative" to European integration miss an essential point. In Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia and the other countries of the region, the idea of being "Central European" never had an isolationist connotation. Quite to the contrary: it meant belonging to the *Western* tradition. It is, therefore, only logical that these nations—having, at long last, overcome Soviet domination—now wish to go the whole way: they regard eventual membership in the European Community, the future European Union as the final confirmation of their regained "Western-ness." In addition, they also understand that the European Community is bound to be their anchor of political and economic stability. They know that the Community is the only institution that can provide the reform countries with the support they need on their way towards a stable democracy and a fully functioning market economy.

I am firmly convinced that it is in Western Europe's own interest to grant this support. If we do not succeed in exporting stability to the Eastern half of the continent we shall soon find ourselves importing *instability* from there.

The writing is already on the wall. The demons of *nationalism* that we have been seeing at work in former Yugoslavia are, already, rearing their ugly heads in many other parts of Europe. The grave *economic* crisis of Eastern Europe is already affecting the Western half of the continent in the form of recession, migratory pressures and organized crime. The dramatic developments in Moscow and recent parliamentary elections in Poland have, finally, also shown us the risks of a swing-back that could even endanger the new *political* order of Europe. If Western Europe does not assist the reform policies of East Central Europe more effectively the democratic forces of these countries will be the first to pay the bill. Popular discontent with the hardships of reform will continue to drive them out of office, and Western Europe will be confronted with a growing number of neo-communist or neo-nationalist leaders, or an alliance of both, in its immediate neighborhood.

Dealing with Central Europe, the eminent British historian Hugh Seton-Watson once referred to the fallacies of the immediate post-Versailles period "when men were convinced that if you had the right constitution down on paper, liberty and progress were yours." I sometimes fear that we are making



the same mistake all over again. In my opinion, a gradual opening-up of common European structures is, by far, the best support that we can offer to the new democracies. I stress the word "gradual." Cooperation with the new democracies in East Central Europe will, probably, have to go through successive stages.

The existing Western European or transatlantic organizations need to strengthen their own structures before they can cope with the challenge of a formal engagement. The countries of East Central Europe will also have to continue their economic, and in some cases also their political reform process before they can become partners in integration and full-scale political cooperation. But this partnership must be the final goal. As for the European Community, the European Council, at its meeting in Copenhagen, already provided the Central European reform countries with a clear-cut membership perspective, as soon as they are "able to assume the obligations of membership by satisfying the economic and political conditions required."

This may still take a considerable amount of time, particularly in the economic area. In this field, premature integration could also be harmful to the reform countries themselves. It is not in their interest to expose their economies to forces of competition that they cannot, yet, sustain. But I do ask myself whether *foreign policy and security* cooperation with the nations of East Central Europe must also wait until these countries have "caught up" economically.

In the present state of European affairs, it may soon turn out that some kind of effective foreign policy and security cooperation will have to precede full economic integration. On this point, some ideas have already been presented. Recent proposals of the European Commission on the creation of a "European Political Area," some documents of the European Parliament, and the initiative of French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur in favor of a "Pact on Stability in Europe" offer interesting food for thought. I also follow the ongoing debate on a "new NATO" most attentively. Without necessarily subscribing to the drastic statement that "NATO must go out of the area or it will go out of business," I do believe that the Atlantic Alliance *can* make a growing contribution to the security needs of the countries of East Central Europe. Within the framework of NACC, the East Central European countries are already involved in a regular dialogue on security with the Alliance. I believe that the progressive development of practical forms of se-

curity cooperation should be seen as a realistic policy option.

Over the medium term, Austria's Central European neighbors, countries like the Czech Republic, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia and Croatia, will thus move towards structures that we used to define as "Western" or "West European." Does this mean that Austria must now neglect all forms of regional—Central European—cooperation?

I do not think that this is the case. The experience of these last four years has, in fact, shown us that there is some potential for regional cooperation *within* Central Europe. At a multilateral level, the so-called "Central European Initiative" has, so far, provided Austria, Italy, Hungary, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland, Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina with a useful framework for an informal political dialogue and joint projects in different areas. Austria's bilateral ties with her neighbors in East Central Europe have also become much stronger since 1989. Just take the case of our economic relations:

(1) Four years after the disappearance of the Iron Curtain, Austria accounts for over 10 percent of OECD trade to East Central Europe; our exports to that region have increased dramatically: for instance, a growth rate of 52 percent vis-à-vis former Czechoslovakia in 1992; 71 percent vis-à-vis Poland in 1991.

(2) Austrian firms participate in one-third of all joint ventures in Slovakia, and in over 20 percent of those established in the Czech Republic, in Hungary and in Slovenia.

(3) At the same time, Austria gives more assistance, on a per capita basis, to the transformation process of the reform countries in East Central Europe than any other member state of OECD.

Let me, furthermore, stress the fact that our cultural relations with our Central and Eastern European neighbors have also greatly increased. Since 1989 we have opened Austrian libraries and reading rooms in over 20 cities in East Central Europe.

I do not wish to overestimate these figures, but I think that they reflect an interesting development. I, nonetheless, believe that Central European cooperation must be seen in the greater European context. What I have described only became possible because our neighbors "returned home" to Europe *as such*. If this process came to a halt there would



also be no future for a specific Central European cooperation.

On the other hand, Austria and her neighbors in Central Europe will have an *even better chance* to re-establish the logic of Central European geography, and to recreate classic patterns of Central European trade once they find themselves within a common framework of European integration. In the meanwhile, membership in the European Community ought to provide Austria with the most effective platform to pursue her interests vis-à-vis East Central Europe. In its written opinion on Austria's membership application, the European Community Commission already made the point that "the Community would also benefit from the experience of a country whose geographical position, history and the ties it has retained and forged place it right at the heart of the new Europe that is taking shape."

In past times, it was rarely considered a privilege to be located in the center of Europe. Austria's national anthem refers to our "embattled" position in the middle of the continent. In an essay on the many tragedies of Central Europe, the Czech writer Milan Kundera once commented on the strangely melancholic nature of most Central European national anthems. The theme is not the "*jour de gloire*" or the "send her victorious, happy and glorious, long to reign over us"; they often seem to follow the

example of the Polish national anthem which begins with the famous line: "As yet, Poland is not lost." In the opinion of Kundera, this is due to the fact that the major Western European nations simply do not fear extinction whereas the "small nations" of Central Europe know what it means to be wiped off the map. For Milan Kundera, the nations of Central Europe are an integral part of European history—and can, in the long run, thus only survive in a common European context.

It is true that the ups and downs of their own history have made most Central Europeans skeptical as to the chances of a short-term success on the way towards European unity. I, for one, am not even sure that European integration has already become fully irreversible, *within* Western Europe. But I am convinced that Europe has today arrived at a crossroads: If we do not advance on the path of integration, if we do not progress towards an ever closer union of the peoples of Europe, we shall soon be up against the forces of an aggressive nationalism; the horrors of former Yugoslavia may, very well, repeat themselves elsewhere; and the peoples of Central Europe will always be among the first to suffer.

I hope that your conference will take these considerations into account. I wish you all the best for your forthcoming deliberations.



# ROUNDTABLE ON GEOPOLITICAL CHALLENGES

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*Proposition: The security concerns of the countries of East Central Europe are overwhelmingly fashioned by the emergence of a powerful, united Germany, the decline in and redefinition of Russia's geopolitical status, and the complex responses of their neighbors to both trends.*

*Question: Can the countries of East Central Europe survive as viable political, nonmilitarist entities?*

## **Marshall Shulman**

*Harriman Institute*

In his introductory remarks, Professor Marshall Shulman identified certain "transforming developments" in international politics concerning East Central Europe. In particular, he juxtaposed "the accelerating pace of technology," influencing the development of economy, and "the resurgence of nationalism," both religious and ethnic.

## **Volodymyr Khandogy**

*Deputy Representative, Permanent Mission of Ukraine to the United Nations*

When analyzing the region, it's useful to divide East and Central Europe into two parts: countries with a tradition of statehood and new states that emerged from the Soviet Empire. Will they survive as viable independent and non-militarist entities?

Events in Russia constitute the biggest challenge, followed by the internal economic and political situation of Ukraine. Ukraine views its cooperation with Europe and participation in European economic structures as "one of the most important international guarantees for its national security and independence." Ukraine is situated in a zone of great instability because of regional tensions (military, ethnic and economic). Therefore, President Leonid Kravchuk launched an initiative to establish in East Central Europe a region of stability and security. The zone would encompass the countries from the Baltic states to the Black Sea and would become in the future an integral part of the European security system, which would be firmly anchored into the Atlantic security system spanning

from Vancouver to Vladivostok. Thus, "security for oneself through security for everybody." The system would seek to prevent local ethnic conflicts (e.g., those in the former Yugoslavia and USSR). Within the European framework, Ukraine would aspire to build "a democratic state of law, economically strong, politically active, peaceful, in which individual rights are respected and guaranteed regardless of nationality or other distinctions."

In the context of non-militaristic aspirations of Ukraine, the country must deal with its nuclear weapons. Ukraine intends to become a non-nuclear state in the future and has taken significant steps towards achieving that goal by signing various treaties with Russia and Europe. But Ukraine requires financial assistance to dismantle its nuclear arsenal (an estimated \$2.8 billion).

In conclusion, Mr. Khandogy remarked, "We in Ukraine believe that our country will survive as a viable political, nonmilitarist state," but East and West European states must cooperate.

## **Wojciech Ponikiewski**

*First Secretary, Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations*

Mr. Ponikiewski opened his remarks by posing three questions: What is the new reality in Europe? What are the threats to the security of countries of East and Central Europe? What is our response to these threats?

*Factors that determine the East Central European reality:*

(1) A power vacuum came into being after the breakdown of bipolarism. This vacuum will persist until a clear leadership over Europe and the world is established.

(2) The geostrategic situation in Europe has been fundamentally altered. Several states regained independence, while others are experiencing independence for the first time in their history. For example, Poland previously shared borders with three states and now borders seven states.

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*Note: Summaries of the roundtable discussions were graciously provided by the Institute on East Central Europe.*



(3) "As a consequence of the end of the Cold War and the East-West conflict, security relations in the Euroatlantic area have lost their simplicity, particularly from the Western side." The situation in Europe, in the view of Poland's foreign minister, is in a state of flux. NATO or the Western European core faces an increasingly unstable periphery, a situation that will likely continue into the next century.

(4) Security is increasingly achieved through cooperation between nations, not domination over nations. A new understanding of the concept of security is evolving—before it was solely military, whereas "today it encompasses the ingredients of the economic, social, or ecological nature... The military factor, however, remains in force."

*Threats to security of the region:*

(1) The military threat. "We can now exclude the [outside] tendencies to slow down the nation-building processes" in the East and in the Balkans. But the danger of recourse to the traditional methods of military superiority as means for political domination persists.

(2) Economic crisis. The second threat derives from "the unstable power structure and deeply entrenched economic crisis" arising from the political and economic transformation of the area. In some countries, "the legitimacy of political power is... precarious... This may lead to the alienation of elites and to a [political] crisis."

"In the majority of the former Soviet republics we can only speak of the beginnings of the democratic process." Ponikiewski warned that the return to power of "reactionary forces" in Russia would dramatically influence the relations with Poland. Mr. Ponikiewski outlined the history of Russian-Polish diplomatic relations and emphasized that the Russians had attempted to push through a treaty that would make Poland dependent upon Russia.

(3) Tensions within the Commonwealth of Independent States. The third threat stems from the overall development in the East, namely, the internal crises of the Commonwealth of the Independent States (CIS), which is both politically and legally a nebulous creation. Russia keeps the reintegration option open, while other former Soviet republics avoid forming any such links. "Economic factors play in favor of some unity" between those states, but interethnic tensions could lead to armed conflict.

(4) The rise of nationalism. "We face the danger of nationalism not only in the Eastern part of Europe but in the West as well."

Most threats "may be coming from the East but at least two of them may be valid for Germany — economic crisis and nationalism."

For these reasons, "Poland's security would be enhanced if it participated in the same security system as Germany." Poland should belong to NATO. The Polish approach to the threat from the East is "Europeanization." Poland has championed similar aspirations on the part of the former Soviet republics, including Russia, particularly in the arena of human rights.

Poland, therefore, endorses European policies. First, bilateral relations based upon values embraced by Europe. Second, reconstruction of economic relations in the East and the establishment of economic links with the West. Third, promotion of contacts between people, especially young people, and the "debureaucratization of cooperation in culture, science, and other fields." Fourth, support for the democratic transformation in the East, "including the establishment of market economies in the East, and independent statehood for our neighbors." Fifth, cooperation in the regional groupings with the Council of the Baltic States (including Russia and Belarus).

The most crucial task for Polish diplomacy at this time is membership in NATO. Some NATO states do not oppose extending the alliance's operations into Central Europe. "The CSCE constitutes another pillar of the European security system. It must be transformed into an efficient organization" capable of managing conflicts.

In his closing remarks, Mr. Ponikiewski stressed that the situation should be viewed in a Pan-European context. "Poland will survive as a viable political entity, but its long-term security definitely depends on already existing European security structures."

### **Jan Zaprudnik**

*Belarusan Institute of Arts and Sciences (New York City)*

Throughout his presentation, Dr. Zaprudnik returned to the issue of Belarusan dependency upon Moscow and the consequences of this dependency for foreign policy.



Three general factors hinder informed and extensive public discussion of foreign-policy issues in Belarus:

(1) The lack of qualified experts. Belarus does not have a single foreign-policy periodical. With the exception of *Russian* television, there is an acute shortage of outside information sources.

(2) The preponderance of the old ways, including the use of the Russian language in administration.

(3) The critical shortage of foreign currency impedes the operations of the Foreign Ministry. For example, only 60 diplomats are employed, when the workload demands 110.

Two mutually contradictory orientations influence Belarusian foreign policy. First, there are those who are primarily concerned with the pressing economic crisis and who promote close cooperation with Russia, with whom it shares many cultural aspects and who remains the chief supplier of industrial products. Then there are those who recognize the distinctive features of their nation and who envision an independent future, also for historical reasons. To illustrate the historical legacy and its impact on present-day politics, Zaprudnik offered an outline of Belarusian history from the 17th century, one which stressed the German and Russian/Soviet presence, as well as ties with Poland. According to Zaprudnik, Belarus looked to the West and "possessed a Western-type culture" distinct from Muscovy. But the cultural ties with Russia are undeniable, by even the most ardent nationalist. "No matter the degree of cultural affinity shared by Belarus and Germany, the ties with Russia are infinitely deeper... As things stand now, many Belarusians cannot think of themselves apart from Russia." Even officials admit that "Russians are not a minority" in Belarus.

Zaprudnik, however, did note that "nothing holds [Belarus] so close to Russia as the economy." Belarus is experiencing a profound economic crisis. Last year the GNP of Belarus decreased by 11%; the monthly rate of inflation exceeds 30%. In addition, Belarus, for all practical purposes, is dependent upon Russia in military matters—over 100,000 CIS troops (commanded from Russia) are stationed on Belarusian territory.

The opposition in Belarus constantly calls for "the return to Europe"—primarily citing historical and cultural grounds. As Zaprudnik noted, "in Russia you have a progressive government and a reactionary parliament, in Belarus the situation is the reverse." The opposition Parliament objects to the pro-Moscow orientation, but the government

continues its own policies, such as the economic agreement with Russia providing for a common currency (the ruble zone). The opposition supports the concept of a Baltic Sea Commonwealth to promote regional cooperation, which the government has spurned as "an anti-Russian bloc."

Germany has manifested an interest in Belarus. Trade between Germany and Belarus has grown dramatically. During the period from January to July 1993 Germany's share in Belarus' export nearly doubled in comparison with the previous year, while imports rose even more steeply, growing to 24.9% from 10%. Cultural, economic and ecological exchange/assistance from Germany continues to increase.

Belarus, in Zaprudnik's opinion, is currently pursuing a pro-Eastern orientation, seeks neutrality, and hopes for a Russian military withdrawal. He, however, expressed little optimism for the removal of Russian forces.

### Jack F. Matlock, Jr.

*Harriman Institute*

Professor Jack Matlock, former Ambassador to the USSR, stressed that when "thinking security, we cannot ignore the internal situation of the countries... In my opinion, the greatest security threat is internal rather than external, which does not mean that we can ignore the external."

"The great problem today is that the security system which for over 40 years prevented an outbreak of war in Europe has now broken down." The U.N. simply cannot provide for the world's security needs. The Warsaw Pact, although forcefully imposed on most of its members, nevertheless did serve a certain purpose—it prevented war in Europe. "With the breakdown of this system we have seen wars reoccur in Europe—in the Balkans, in the Caucasus and in Moldova... If we are to cope with this, we really need to redesign the system."

Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovakia have all voiced the desire to become members of NATO, but Russia should not be made to feel left out of the system. Germany really does not present a threat anymore. Russia, of course, is still a great power and it does belong in a system, if it is prepared to play by the appropriate rules, which also would guarantee its security within its current borders. What sort of rules would these be?

First, the international community has an obligation to prevent the situation from getting out of

hand. "The present borders, certainly the present borders of what was once the Soviet Union, should be guaranteed by the participants in the security system. There should be a commitment not to pursue irredentist claims. This would not prevent negotiations, under CSCE principles, of peaceful transfer of territory, if it was mutually decided. But it would prohibit formal claims on the territory of other states, whatever the historical circumstances. And sometimes you have to draw a line on these historical disputes." Second, "there has to be a commitment... that the national minority groups receive full protection in all of their legitimate needs for cultural development and the use of their language."

Leaving Russia out of the security system would inevitably encourage the very imperialist tendencies that must be suppressed and overcome in Russia, if Russia is to become a democratic country. "An empire really cannot be democratic, not in today's world." Early NATO membership for some of the countries in Eastern Europe could have a dangerous effect on Russia. "Would it not be better to work together with Russian democratic leaders to build a structure that includes Russia?" CSCE perhaps would best meet Russia's needs.

Matlock further noted that economic factors play an extremely important role in security issues. An attempt, therefore, should be made to create an environment that would facilitate a smoother economic transformation in East Central Europe and Russia. "I'm thinking now particularly about opening up the markets." West Europeans have not been forthcoming on the subject, while the U.S. resents Western Europe's protectionist agricultural policies.

"The most important thing about the Marshall Plan," in Matlock's opinion, "was not that a certain amount of assistance was transferred from North America to Western Europe, but the fact that American markets were kept open. We allowed Western Europe and Japan to revive by opening our markets to theirs. No matter what our domestic difficulties are, if we close our markets and make it more difficult for the East and Central European countries to find them there, we are probably going to be putting upon them burdens that may turn out to be insurmountable. And these are going to have implications in the security sphere."

## Alexander J. Motyl

*Harriman Institute*

The fundamental problem is not any one neighbor; the fundamental problem is Russia. It is perceived as a threat by all of these countries, which, in turn, impels East Central European countries to seek separate alliances, support and security in the West. To the question whether Russia is a problem, Motyl answered with a resounding "yes." If for no other reason, Russia is dangerous, because it is the successor to the Soviet Empire.

What makes Russia dangerous? First, as long as Russia keeps its troops on the territories of the newly independent states, there will be a tendency for Russia to get involved in the affairs, external or internal, of its neighbors. Second, Russia is internally unstable. Various ethnic groups have proclaimed independence and the economy is in shambles. At the present, "[Russia] is hardly a democratic country."

A particularly troubling development is not only the attempt by the reactionaries in Russia to resuscitate the former USSR, but the fact that Russia's military is so weakened that it would not be able to reimpose imperial controls and would "make a bad situation worse... Various East Central European states perceive Russia as a potential or actual threat. These views may be exaggerated in certain cases, but clearly there are reasons for their fears."

Can Western European structures provide security for East Central Europeans? Will they work? There's some doubt about the feasibility of West European integration. If the integration does not occur smoothly, "then the potential for Germany to begin acting on its own in East Central Europe will increase." Moreover, Motyl noted that U.S. commitment with regard to its presence in and the defense of Europe remained uncertain. In sum, the feasibility of the expansion of the Western security system eastward "would have to be premised on the West's willingness to disregard what it perceives to be Russia's interests."

Where do you draw the line in defending Eastern Europe from Russia? Do you include only Poland and the Czech Republic? Or do you extend the security umbrella to Ukraine and Belarus as well? But that would exclude Russia from any security arrangement and would presumably weaken Yeltsin and strengthen his opposition. In the short term, the only solution to security concerns on the part of Germany and Russia may be some kind of Central European security system, which would coexist with NATO and by virtue of its relative powerless-



ness would not be perceived as so much of a threat by Russia itself.

In the long run, in 5 to 15 years, Russia, because of its history and tradition, will become a threat to all of its neighbors but especially to the Baltic states, Ukraine, and Belarus—and, by extension, to Poland, the Czech and Slovak republics, and Hungary. Should Russia abandon its experiment in democ-

racy and free market reforms or revive its imperial tendencies, it will be perceived as a threat by the West as well. Only then will European integration take place and East Central Europe, within or without the structures of NATO, will be viewed as *cordon sanitaire* from an authoritarian and imperialist Russia.

## ROUNDTABLE ON DOMESTIC CHALLENGES

*Proposition: The rise of extremist political movements, the complexity of economic reform, the difficulty of dealing with the Communist past, and the emergence of ethnic rivalries threaten the transitions to democracy in all the countries of East Central Europe.*

*Question: Can democracy survive?*

**Steven Solnick**

*Harriman Institute*

Some of the countries of East Central Europe recently have seen the return to power of neo-Communists or successor Communist parties, a condition largely attributable to the problems stemming from the hardships of the economic transformation. This raises a whole host of questions concerning the viability of economic reforms and democracy in Eastern Europe and the newly emergent states of the former Soviet Union.

**John Micgiel**

*Institute on East Central Europe*

About 10 months ago people became edgy over the Lithuanian elections that brought the Communists back to power; now with the Polish elections going to the Communists we are ready for more surprises. There was a remarkable turnout in Poland. Fifty-one percent of the electorate turned out to vote in elections that resulted in a truly staggering defeat of the Right in Poland. The Right was fragmented by the overpowering ambitions of its leaders who refused to cooperate in any sort of

rational pre-electoral coalition that would have assured their presence in the new parliament. They were not the only people who were defeated; the great trade union movement that battled the Communist government for 10 years and eventually toppled it in 1989 fared no better. Only 1 out of every 10 Solidarity members voted for it and as a result it failed to enter the new parliament. To enter one needed about 5% of the popular vote or if you were a coalition of parties one had to pass the barrier of 8%. And Solidarity failed to do that. The parties of the Left which were descended from the old Communist order received approximately the same number of seats in this new parliament as they did in the first parliament of 1989. Because of the new electoral law, fully one-third of those Poles who voted will not have representatives in the new parliament.

How did this happen? Did democracy fail to work in Poland? I would argue to the contrary that democracy is thriving in Poland. The problem is that politics, even in a democracy, sometimes leads to paradoxes as, in the case of Poland, economic performance. Over the last four years Poland has made tremendous progress. Poland halted the galloping inflation of 1988-89; it created a stable and convertible currency. Sixty percent of Poles work in the private sector. Growth is estimated officially at something like 4 to 5%. The finance minister of the Suchocka government was even more optimistic. After factoring in the so-called "gray sector," the area where people usually do not report their income, he announced that Poland is growing at a rate of 9%. This may be too optimistic, but even if Poland grows at a rate of 5%, it still puts it way ahead of all

the countries of Europe and that's no small achievement in the space of four years. Western capital is entering Poland; an agreement on debt reduction was negotiated with Western governments; the Polish government is also negotiating a private debt reduction agreement; there's also a working tax system; the Value Added Tax (VAT) has produced more revenue than was foreseen; even the loss of the Eastern market, the Comecon market, was partially offset by the switch-over to Western partners, which has not been working out so well of late, but in the past we were all amazed at how well it all went. The Poles have also had great successes in foreign policy issues. They have friendly relations with virtually all of their neighbors. Even if relations with Lithuania are sometimes foul, there is at least the prospect of entering into the EC and NATO, and as of August 1993, when public opinion polls were conducted, it was estimated that one-third of the population was relatively better off than it was in the years past. I assume that these were the people who were more entrepreneurial. By the way, among these people I include a fairly large group of old Communists who are by far the most successful capitalists in Poland. There are other statistics that I can give you, but I am not sure they really mean anything. I read in the press a while ago that there are twice as many registered cars in Poland now as there were in 1989; the number of color TV sets and VCRs has skyrocketed, and so on and so forth. That's the good news.

On the other hand, many of these results do not apply to many people. Something like one-third of the population, including many retired people, are visibly poor. There are low wages and low pensions; the unemployment rate is unacceptably high at 12-15%; there are widespread feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction. There's a rising crime rate in Poland, and not just in Poland, and there's a longing for the "security" of the old days. These problems were fodder for the parties of the Left, the ex-Communists and the Peasants, who cooperated throughout the 44-year period of Communist rule in Poland. The Communists were popularly derided by most Poles in 1989 and ignored for the most part by the parties of the Right who preferred to vie with one another for the right to lead Poland in the post-Communist era and also to enjoy the privileges of the trappings of power. Clearly, it was a significant attraction for many who joined the regime. This, by the way, is a movement known derisively in Polish as *bitwa o stolec*, or the struggle for the seat. A lot of people went into the service for the above reasons. As for the Communists, they had

a well-organized, well-disciplined party organization throughout the country, as did the Peasants. Both were able to capitalize on these feelings of discontent. In the end, they drew voters away from the fragmented and disorganized parties of the Center and the Right. The electoral statute that was drafted by the last parliament, which, ironically, was dominated by the Center and Right parties, provided for a voting threshold. As a result, the Left received even more seats and now comprises approximately two-thirds of the Lower House and three-fourths of the Senat. I am convinced that the inability to communicate economic policy, the inability to make propaganda, if you will, by the government of Ms. Suchocka, contributed to these results. I think the losing parties would have done much, much better had that message gotten across, if in fact intellectuals had done their jobs. The Polish liberals have continued to let facts speak for themselves, instead of undertaking the challenge of properly informing and educating the public. This is another paradox, because these people, for the most part, are intellectuals who should have had little difficulty in articulating their point of view. Their failure to do so contributed to the victory of the Left. That was accepted, although with a lot of grumbling, and with calls for unity on the Right, but it was accepted. That is what's important here. Despite rifts between various parties, the players stayed within the limits set by the democratically enacted electoral statute—the decision was accepted peacefully and without the turmoil that we see in Russia. Even the press in Poland played the game, with the exception of one paper that published the results on the night of the elections, which got them a little bit in a hot water. It turned out that the electoral law did not really have any teeth and that for a relatively small fine they were able to have a scoop on the Polish elections.

In any case, the question today, I think, is how the new, Left-dominated parliament will address economic and political issues. If the post-Communists—the SLD—and the Peasant Party—the PSL—act to fulfill their electoral promises, such as raising retirement pensions, the salaries of teachers and health care workers, providing increased employment, and halting mass privatization, they will start a chain of events that might and probably would include the following features: bringing new Western investment to a halt; a rise in inflation, and a budget deficit above the 5% ceiling agreed upon by the IMF, which, in turn, would have further serious consequences for Poland economically. The post-Communists have begun to backpedal on those



promises and various officials in the Polish administration will find very little room for maneuvering. That is to say, the Communists will not fulfill the demagoguery in which they engaged during the electoral campaign. The matter of how far the new government is willing to go to change economic policy is, of course, a highly charged political issue. Although the post-Communists and the Polish Peasant party have agreed, in principle, to form a government, the economic radicalism, or pro-statism of the latter, and the personal ambitions of politicians of both parties may make formation of a new government difficult or impossible.

During this morning's panel the issue was raised as to whether the West bears any responsibility for endangering progress toward economic reform in Poland. I think the answer is yes, in the Polish case, to the extent that the Suchocka government loyally implemented changes in accord with the IMF that it had previously hammered out and signed. Many observers have criticized the IMF for forcing conventional solutions that worked elsewhere on countries with specific problems that make it difficult to attain targets such as the 5% budgetary deficit. I have been told, by the way, that the IMF in effect allowed the Suchocka government a little bit of leeway, because the Poles have exceeded this 5% budgetary cap a bit. But the IMF did not say anything before the elections. In any case, meeting the IMF's criteria shackled the government's social, educational and other policies. So, the West did have an adverse impact. Incidentally, the Suchocka government is still functioning; it is working hard to complete something like 50 pieces of legislation for presentation to the new parliament, as well as something on the order of a political testament. They want to leave their successors with a document that would be a road map for them—if they would care to look at it.

The successor to this government will start with many advantages that I have already mentioned. It will also face issues that may or may not have been addressed in the last four years. There's really no time to get into these issues right now, but let me simply signal them. They include first and foremost the new Constitution. This is an extremely important issue. Today the Constitution of Poland is still the old Stalinist one. There's also discussion about the European Community. In recent public opinion polls, the number of people opposed to Poland's joining the EC has been rising, while the number of supporters has been dropping. There is the issue of membership in NATO. There are other domestic issues, like the issue of the separation of the church

and state, compulsory religious instruction in schools, possible renegotiation of the concordat with the Holy See; and the anti-abortion legislation that was so hotly debated last year and passed by the Polish Parliament this spring. That will surely come under the glare of the Parliament. The media laws will be looked at, especially the ones that called for programming with Christian content. All of these constitute specific domestic political and economic challenges. These problems are not unique to Poland; other countries share them.

I have no conclusion to give you, because I do not think that a conclusion is a fitting way to close; we'll close this with your questions.

### **Adrian Karatnycky**

*Executive Director, Freedom House*

Mr. Karatnycky began his remarks with the provocative question—"Is Thermidor on in East Central Europe?"

The transitions under way in Eastern Europe demonstrate fundamental differences between the societies, politics, and economies. The ill-defined nature of civil institutions, the absence of civil law, and the deeply ingrained structures of power that in many cases have successfully adapted themselves to the changing times and have reinvented themselves (the neo-Communist elites) underscore the radically different character of the once-totalitarian Eastern bloc. When we survey Eastern Europe, we see that the people who made revolution are either being gradually nudged out of power through electoral processes or military machinations. The old dissidents are being pushed out. Poland may be regarded a bellwether. With the exception of the Czech Republic, which has managed to construct a "normal" civil society, all the other makers of the East European revolutions find themselves once again on the outside, possibly witnessing the transfer of power (e.g., the Polish elections, the collapse of the SDS in Bulgaria and the creation of the so-called technocratic government there, and the Lithuanian elections).

This neo-Communist renaissance should also be credited to the ability to adapt nationalism to its own purposes (e.g., Ukraine, Romania). Furthermore, businessmen are not in the camp of the liberal democrats, since by and large they prefer to side with the Communists who more often than not are themselves ex-Communists.

The difficult process of retribution, or de-Communization, could lead to an unstable transition, but should nevertheless have been performed. In

this context, lustration in the Czech Republic to some degree inoculated the society against the danger of a Communist return.

Judging from the Polish and Russian examples, “the revolutions that took place there were not sufficiently anti-Communist. They moved very quickly into a pragmatic mode. And perhaps, in the short term that mode assured social peace, but in the long run it laid the groundwork for the resurgence of Communism, for Thermidor.”

Nationalism—in the Baltic nations, for example—is caused by largely external factors as Russia attempts to reassert its hegemony in the region. With the exception of Romania, most of the political elites in Eastern Europe have been responsible and tolerant; they have not resorted to nationalist hysteria. Karatnycky contrasted the idealist, liberal democrats of the revolutions of 1989 in Russia and Ukraine with the unscrupulous plotters of the revolutions of 1991. The elites that reemerged in 1991 in Ukraine and Russia utilize nationalism for their own ends. In ex-Yugoslavia the nationalist card is being played to the hilt.

The trade unions, industrialists of the old order, particularly in Russia, present another danger to democracy in East Central Europe. In virtually every instance, the trade unions are privileged and (except for the Czech and Slovak republics) are run by the ex-Communist apparat.

Western policy did not attempt to influence the process of de-Communization. Unlike de-Nazification, de-Communization simply did not take place. Meanwhile, aid policies are designed to bolster Western special interests (e.g., the U.S. agriculture lobby). An excessive amount of money is squandered on so-called Western experts, who briefly visit East Central Europe to give bad advice. “Between 10 to 20% of Western aid goes to empower the people (small entrepreneurs, etc.). The rest goes to maintain bureaucrats, including the experts.” As a result of the economic crisis in East Central Europe, there was scarcely any investment. Finally, the failure to incorporate East Central Europe into the Western security structure further contributed to the instability of the region.

All this notwithstanding, can democracy survive? Yes, of course it can. Freedom of speech and the press will aid its survival. The present level of the development of institutions for a civil society provides for an optimistic picture of the future of the democratic society in East Central Europe.

## Andrew Arato

### *New School for Social Research*

Professor Arato strongly disagreed with Mr. Karatnycky’s presentation and addressed their differences before commencing with his own remarks: “First, I was surprised, really, that someone basically on the right is such a Marxist, Thermidor being Trotsky’s term. And in the case of East Central Europe it is a misnomer. Second, is there a danger of a Communist restoration? Do the Communists pose a danger to democracy in the region? First of all, there’s not a region in a sense of a unified region. Karatnycky’s right only in those places where there’s danger of a red-brown coalition, where Communist regimes have managed to transform themselves either into nationalist ones or Communist ones, tinged with nationalism and neo-socialist economic policies. This applies to Serbia, but the Communist Parties of Ukraine, Bulgaria, or even Lithuania are not a part of some kind of red-brown coalition. This is not the case in Central Europe, outside of Slovakia.” Professor Arato also criticized Karatnycky’s division of the political field into the defenders of freedom and the Communists. The defenders of freedom, the dissidents, have been pushed out of power by the new East European Right. This even took place in the Czech case, where the Left dissidents were pushed out by the advocates of lustration.

Turning to his own remarks, Arato posited that there is a three-field problem in East Central Europe: (1) the Right (or the new Right, which is really a new-old Right), (2) the Communists, and (3) the liberals who are criticized for their opposition to the lustration, de-Communization, etc. In Poland, the Right has destroyed itself. Poland’s Right looks backwards, deriving its traditions and its political philosophies from the past. The program is fundamentally a negative one: de-Communization, out with the reds, out with the pinks, out with the makers of the roundtable agreements. They failed and thank God they failed. Arato believes that they should be relegated to the past where they belong and he expressed the hope that the Hungarian right would soon follow them. “This is the positive result of the Polish election. It has to be seen as a positive result because if one dispassionately looks in this fashion at the history of 100 years in Hungary and Poland, it was the Right that was the danger to democratic institutions, it was the Right that tried its hands in various coup d’états, it was the Right that attacked the media, and so on. It was much more so in Hungarian than in Polish history, obviously because the Right has been in power. In the



three-field structure, the weakening of the Right inevitably strengthens Left forces."

Turning to the Hungarian case, why will this not lead, all the same, to a Polish scenario in Hungary? According to polls, for the last three years, the party that has dominated there is the Alliance of Young Democrats, akin to the U.S. Republican Party in its philosophy, minus the Religious Right; certainly a right-center party, but not a party that's connected to the Christian or nationalist Right. It is a party that's connected to human rights, and similar to the Democratic Union in Poland. Meanwhile, there's recently been a rise of the Hungarian Socialists. They will not win, though, because, unlike in Poland, they have no partner. In Hungary there's no danger of a Communist restoration. The Socialists have behaved in an exemplary fashion, voting with the liberals on all issues concerning human rights (freedom of the media, supporting the liberal president of Hungary, etc.). It's a loyal opposition party. Unlike in Poland, the liberal parties in Hungary are united so they won't be left out of the parliament.

Three issues remain crucial to the stabilization of democracy in Hungary: (1) constitutional stabilization—the presidential prerogative, freedom of the media, and the reduction of the power of the court; (2) the creation of a truly functioning party system—better electoral legislation needs to be enacted; (3) the problem of institutionalizing state and well-developed civil societies remains an issue for the whole region—governments need to include the participation of the civil society in their economic reforms. The Balcerowicz reforms were the right way to go, but their execution led to the exclusion of too many of the people from the decision-making process. One needs to learn how to square the circle, namely, to create a social agreement that would delay economic demands from the working people for as long as possible. Otherwise, the lack of communication will result in social tension and misunderstanding.

If there is any danger to democracy, it will come from the authoritarian Right and not the old Left. That danger is connected to social demagoguery, which is connected to austerity programs and the great dysfunctional consequences. A civil society exists in Eastern Europe but if one does not bargain with it and create a new social contract, authoritarianism is around the corner.

## Romuald Misiunas

*Associate, Harriman Institute*

There are basic differences among the Baltic peoples. Most of my examples will come from Lithuania and some of them will not necessarily apply to Latvia and Estonia. Can democracy survive in these three countries? I will answer with a qualified yes, depending on what you mean by democracy.

First, the factors working in favor of democracy: (1) *Zeitgeist*—any non-democratic state would be a pariah in Europe today. That was not the case before the war. (2) All three countries are multiethnic states, a fact that speaks in favor of democracy. Multiethnicity promotes democracy. (3) Opening up the area and seeing the outside world naturally fosters the desire to emulate the prosperous democratic countries. In particular, Estonia looks to Scandinavia. (4) At least for the moment, democracy appears to be the only option. In response to a question concerning the likelihood of a coup d'état, Lithuania's Minister of Defense stated that currently there's nobody who could organize one.

The primary factor working against democracy is the poorly-developed political culture. Politics, particularly in Lithuania, are riddled with patronage. The Right in Lithuania, as in Poland, is absolutely split. To begin with, parties are not parties, but people grouped around ideas, e.g., the only difference between some right-wing parties is that the leaders can't stand each other. A second factor is the increasing economic difficulties, which give rise to social problems. Third, national feelings, which are particularly strong among the ruling ethnic groups in all three countries. A coalition of former party technocrats and emigres, traditionally strong anti-Communists, is forming. Moreover, the concept of citizenship is changing and voter participation has dropped. Finally, the tendency toward the politicization of the legal system and courts.

Perhaps the Baltics will develop a true parliamentary democracy. Utilizing the existing, semi-developed structure, a system has emerged—a combination of nationalism and socialism, which will persist in the Baltic nations for the foreseeable future.

**Tom Kent***International Editor, Associated Press*

There's no question that there has been a partial Communist restoration in East Central Europe. Some groups have a social agenda that more resembles a social democracy rather than Communism, but it could cause a lot of economic problems, both in the short and long terms. There's a need for the West to bolster the democratic process in these countries. Yet, the existence of a fairly lively media, with the exception of Slovakia, a lively political discourse and public opinion committed to democracy, at least as a concept, augur well for the new system. Economic problems are severe and will have a lasting effect on how these countries develop. The suffering of the population in each of the countries is pronounced. Western aid is either not interested or not there. At the same time, there's momentum for privatization.

People complain about the mafia taking over in East Central Europe. By mafia they mean the old Communists and the secret police, but "those were some of the smartest people in the old days, that's probably why they got into the Communist Party and the secret police." It is not unprecedented, even in our own country, for people or families to start in illegal activities and eventually become pillars of society. So, perhaps this informal mafia—the black

economy—contains the seeds of a more progressive economy in the future, even though some of the methods may be a bit unsavory.

As for the Communist legacy, the West overestimated the degree to which the Communist ideology would fade away. We thought it was really the end of history; but the Left has risen once again and has some popular support. It is also a stabilizing factor. As wonderful as liberal thought may be in some respects, the social safety features of Communism are still valued by a great many people.

Ethnic rivalries constitute an extremely powerful and dangerous force. Nationalist unrest presents a genuine danger to democracy, whether it manifests itself as a military conflict or in the more subtle forms of discrimination (e.g., language requirements, etc).

As far as democracy is concerned, although the West instinctively wishes to see the political spectrum be as broad as possible, the choices are probably more limited and limiting. After all, we do not have a powerful Communist or extreme Right party in the U.S. Why should East Central Europe be expected to embrace all points of the spectrum? The West, therefore, should support centrist parties. The real test for democracy in Eastern Europe will be voter turnout for future elections. The future of democracy is in the people's hands.

## ROUNDTABLE ON COOPERATIVE FRAMEWORKS

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*Proposition: The similar geopolitical and domestic challenges facing the countries of East Central Europe necessitate that they cooperate in overcoming them.*

*Question: Is meaningful cooperation possible among countries with different histories, cultures, and perceptions of national interest?*

**Franz Cede***Austrian Ministry of Foreign Affairs*

What is Central and Eastern Europe? One could fill libraries with the debates on the issue. But the key question in our discussion today is whether

Central and Eastern Europe also includes the former Soviet Union, the Commonwealth of Independent States, and particularly the republics of Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and the Baltic states. Or does East Central Europe exclude the European chunk of the CIS? This is what we have to keep in mind when we tackle these issues of cooperation in the security and economic fields. The second point of clarification I want to make is that it is absolutely necessary to make clear that cooperation may include both security and economic matters.

There are two extreme approaches to the aforementioned problem. Minister Mock proposed that the countries of Eastern and Central Europe should



seek cooperation with the West and seek integration into the West. On the other extreme of the spectrum one finds the position that the countries of East Central Europe must first sort out their own security arrangements or develop some sort of economic cooperation before becoming full partners with the West. The question to be answered depends on the stand one takes on these two positions.

Is cooperation possible? Yes!

### Ernst Sucharipa

*Ambassador, Permanent Representative of Austria to the United Nations*

Both the proposition and the question put forward are pertinent. For the reasons outlined below, my answer to the proposition is affirmative. To the question I would reply that such cooperation should be seen as not only possible but as imperative. Some of the challenges facing these countries are very similar:

- Difficulties on the road to democratization
- Slow pace of economic transformation
- Ethnic heterogeneity of most states
- A (perceived) security vacuum
- Transboundary ecological risks
- Organized crime
- Mass migration and flows of refugees
- The lack of traditional links and networks among the countries, since under the old system everything (trade, transport, etc.) was oriented toward the center in Moscow.

Some of these elements taken together have led to disenchantment with the reform process. The lack of strong and efficient institutions able to restrain personal ambitions, a maximalist approach to power, rising unemployment, declining real wages and social services have weakened the social fabric of states, thereby making it easier for demagogues and political gamblers to push their personal agendas under the guise of nationalism, giving rise to hostile attitudes toward minorities and even neighbors.

The paradox of this situation is that what should unite these countries also separates them. In other words, many—if not most—of these challenges can be successfully dealt with only through cooperation. They relate to issues that are either too large to handle for any single state or are inherently transnational in an interdependent system. If one state were to attempt to tackle them unilaterally it would

be at the expense of a neighbor who, in turn, would be tempted to “retaliate” in the broad meaning of this term. Obviously such an approach is neither desirable nor workable. This is where cooperation comes in as an imperative regardless of the above-mentioned “different histories, cultures, and perceptions of national interest.”

There are already various fora in which cooperation is taking place: the Visegrad group of states (who agreed in December 1992 to create a Central European Free Trade Association—CEFTA), the broader Central European Initiative (CEI) or the meeting of Foreign and Defense Ministers of the region held in Vienna on September 7-8, 1993. Then there are other cooperative frameworks such as the CSCE, the Council of Europe (with its first summit meeting coming up on October 8-10, also in Vienna), the WEU-Consultation Forum and the NACC. Now there is also the Balladur Plan on the table. On the economic side—and with this conference taking place in New York—I should also mention the idea of the United Nations Secretary General to establish in Vienna a Center for Economies in Transition.

But many of these countries want more than cooperation. They want integration: economically, politically, and some even militarily. They have—correctly—identified integration as the best security option and as a potent antidote against nationalism. The trouble is, of course, that neither NATO nor the EC are ready yet to include Central and East European countries, although the EC at least held out the prospect of membership in its declaration at the recent Copenhagen summit.

I believe that offering more than a mere beacon of hope to these countries is of vital importance. They must at least be given the chance of a safe home port after crossing troubled waters—even if this crossing might still take years. In the meantime, the concept of extending the strategy of integration to the East will, on the one hand, imply continued economic assistance by the West. This form of contribution to stability should by no means only be seen as charitable altruism: It is above all an insurance premium paid to forestall tomorrow's risks.

On the other hand, there continues to be the military dimension of security. Obviously NATO cannot and will not provide effective security guarantees to the new Eastern European democracies. Nor will the WEU. A new (sub-) regional security arrangement does not appear to be a realistic option either. This leaves us, for the time being, with the alternative of a further development of the security



structures of the CSCE. Its unique quality lies in its broad concept of Europe. Its members subscribe to the same values and goals: pluralistic democracy, the rule of law, respect for human rights and the rights of minorities, inviolability of borders, peaceful settlement of disputes, arms control, disarmament, confidence-building measures and economic and social development. The CSCE must continue to translate these shared values and goals into political action.

(Note: Ambassador Sucharipa was unable to attend the conference. The above background paper was distributed at the meeting.)

## Endre Erdos

*Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Hungary to the United Nations*

I am not going to be controversial, because the thesis I am going to lay out will probably be shared by most, if not all, of my colleagues in the region.

We still find ourselves in the shadow of confusing geographical and political notions. We have been talking for a long time of Eastern Europe as a political concept and today we have to readjust our thinking and try to focus on the geography and not the politics. The question regarding where the former Soviet Union belongs today is impregnated with the previous mode of thinking. We should consider the former empire's stand on economic, political, and social issues. That will probably help us place it somewhere in what we recognize geographically as the Eastern part of Europe, which stretches from Vienna to the Ural Mountains.

After the collapse of the Soviet Union, the countries of the region for the first time rid themselves of domination by the sphere of interests emanating from Moscow. I stress the word Moscow, because in our history we have been squeezed between Germany and Russia. There were times when Berlin was the dictating force and others when Moscow ruled. Geography plays a crucial role. Hungary will never exchange places with Fiji. National sovereignty was recovered by the countries of East Central Europe, so perhaps we can open a new chapter, bearing in mind the political situation. This is very important, because if you lose the sense of reality you may come to believe that you are acting in a vacuum, which is not the case.

I believe we can start building relations based on mutual interests both with Russia and Germany. The region's problems have a multitude of origins. Although these countries are very different, policies of most Western countries, including the U.S.,

have been based on a monolithic approach to this part of the world. They put us in a single basket, ignoring the differences and the specific features of the individual countries. These countries have different national traditions, perspectives and cultural habits; they linguistically belong to different families of languages; these realities are coming to be known by the public more and more. It would be wrong to consider this important chunk of Europe, from the Baltic to the Mediterranean Sea, as one single mass, just as it would be wrong to consider Western Europe from Portugal to Sweden as being something of a coherent mass. But the other side of the equation is that these countries, peoples, and nations have been together for centuries. And not only together side by side, but overlapping as well. The ethnic map of Eastern Europe in its geographical sense is much more colorful than that of Western Europe. It's a very natural phenomenon in Eastern Europe to find places where not only two, but several nationalities coexist. On the one hand, I'd argue that these people have different languages and traditions, while on the other I would equally stress the interconnectedness of these nations.

Following the changes of 1989-90, which my minister likes to call *annus mirabilis*, we found the common denominator, the common values that are the basis for building productive relationships. If you look at the European Community, which at present has twelve members, you will see that all these countries embrace the common values of political democracy and the market economy. But they are very different: Portugal and Denmark; Greece and the United Kingdom. The same applies to our part of Europe. At the same time, one should not come to the conclusion that values in Western and Eastern Europe are fundamentally different. Shared values will be the basis for genuine European integration. The thrust of the policies of East Central European countries is to build bridges to the West. And I want to believe that the West is also trying to build bridges to the East. I believe that we have the same priorities.

In the meantime, before the doors are open, Eastern Europe possesses a number of special regional structures that are functioning and that may be helpful to advance us along the road we have charted for ourselves. In the case of Hungary and many others, this road will lead to full integration into the European Community and membership in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization. One such group is the Central European Initiative, whose members include Italy, Austria, Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia,



Bosnia and Macedonia. A second, more restricted group is the Visegrad coalition, which consists of Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary. The Central European initiative was designed to provide a conduit to the West. The Visegrad group finds itself confronted with similar problems and goals, notably integration into the European Community and NATO. This cooperation should not be viewed as a substitute for joining the West. I want to stress this point, because some may have that impression or might even attempt to push us into creating a buffer zone between the West and the former Soviet Union. I dismiss this approach. I do not think we should become a buffer zone between Russia and the West. These organizations should be utilized to facilitate full-fledged European integration and not to create a substitute for integration.

Joining NATO would be a tool in our hands to circumvent the creation of a buffer zone. Unfortunately, some in the West may regard the admission of Central European countries into NATO as a provocative step vis-à-vis Russia, i.e., the argument that the admission of Hungary or Poland into NATO would be construed by Moscow as an unfriendly act. I confess that we receive mixed signals from Moscow. At times Moscow outright rejects any possibility of agreeing to the scheme, while at other times Russian leaders have given their blessing and speak of a country's sovereign right to determine its own policies. But NATO is not what it used to be. Today the admission of Hungary to the European Community or NATO will not and should not be considered an unfriendly act. NATO is changing, searching for its new identity. I believe NATO should be an adjustable, expandable organization.

One final point, former Yugoslavia. Once again I would stress the West's responsibility for the turn of events. To the question whether these countries with different national traditions, cultures and languages can cooperate—my answer is obviously: Yes! But in light of what has happened within the former Yugoslavia, I'll say that not only countries must cooperate, but also people and communities within a given state. Otherwise, we will witness a repeat of what is taking place now in Bosnia—the introduction of a system of apartheid. And we must do whatever we can to avoid that situation without and within our countries.

## Zbigniew Wlosowicz

*Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Poland to the United Nations*

Our region has changed tremendously. Three years ago we had three neighbors: USSR, DDR, and Czechoslovakia. Now none of those countries exist and we have seven neighbors: Germany, Russia, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Ukraine, Belarus, and Lithuania.

History, culture, and geography have always shaped national policies. They have also affected states by influencing foreign policies. Geography offers a setting for conducting international relationships. History provides the terms of reference for proceeding more or less unobtrusively towards satisfying national interests. Culture offers a *modus operandi* for negotiating the pitfalls and benefits of the exchange. I would add that this does not mean that international organizations are left with no influence and that global problems have no impact in the national context. The tension arises from the deliberate choice of each nation to forgo, in part, its sovereignty in order to arrive at a greater good for all, to see how the creation of additional mechanisms for promoting international interests can be achieved. Since each country is unique and exceptional, the geographies, histories, cultures, traditions, and attitudes of all countries differ. It is precisely this diversity that accounts for the interdependence among nations and for the need to cooperate both at the material and security levels.

Cooperation is at its most useful when the partners are perceived as being equal. It becomes more complicated among parties with contradictory goals, aspirations and value systems. Poland's history encompasses a wide range of experiences, positive and negative, productive and destructive, friendly and antagonistic. It is only in the course of time that one gains enough knowledge and experience to be able to deal with such relationships thoroughly and to select from them what's useful. It is only through collective and constant endeavor that peace, security, and development are realized. It is the act of cooperation, even in the face of adversity, by which arrangements may be arrived at and solutions produced to satisfy the needs of all participants. We know from our experience that everyone loses as a result of antagonism, isolationism, and war. We have also learned that all stand to gain through cooperation and collaboration.

Poland's relations with its neighbors are characterized by vigorous exchange and mutual respect. Friendship requires constant cultivation. Apart



from the formal, conventional relationship, there is the more developed and extensive system of informal relationships. Many families have ties across the borders. People visit each other, compare achievements, and so forth. We are witnessing a very new phenomenon in Poland: people are coming from the eastern part of our region to work in Poland illegally, because they can earn almost 10 times more than they currently can in Belarus and Ukraine.

Poland has managed to formulate a foreign policy that takes into consideration all the needs of the Polish people. This has helped in securing the formation of its foreign policy goals towards all of its neighbors and has contributed to peace and stability in Europe. The fact that our policy goals are the same for all countries concerned makes its implementation not only desirable but essentially operational. Europe at this stage of its development requires openness and exchange. Transformation and transition are taking place not only in Eastern Europe. They cannot be dismissed as an Eastern European shortcoming or a measure of the region's inadequacy. The current transition reflects the spirit of the times and is characteristic of all regions. It requires flexibility and various approaches and responses in different quarters.

Our aspirations appear to have gained recognition or acceptance by both Germany and Russia, our largest neighbors. This is yet another testimony to the possibility of meaningful cooperation and understanding among countries with different outlooks and potentials. Normality among the nations has gradually become the dominant feature. This allows for the steady elimination of prejudice and historically accumulated animosity. Since the reform process in Eastern Europe took power, the barrier that separated Poland from Western Europe has toppled or is in the process of toppling. But there is still a need for reform in many areas: removal of trade barriers, allowing for a freer flow of goods, capital, and labor. Plans for the future, envisaging closer ties and integration, are being formulated. They are based on lessons drawn from history. It is our complicated past, replete with unfulfilled expectations, which justifies the aspirations of the present generation. Prejudice and distrust are being deliberately put aside in favor of friendship and peace. Mutual cooperation is the material foundation for peace and integration and is essential for future cooperation and friendship between Poland and the rest of Europe.

## Alexander Chalyi

*Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ukraine*

Ukraine does not find itself in a comfortable position, situated as it is between Germany and Russia. Ukraine now occupies an extremely isolated position in Europe—Ukraine is not a member of the Visegrad group or the Central European Initiative, nor is it a member of any security agreement with the CIS. On the one hand, the West has closed the door on integration for us. On the other hand, we do not want to pursue integration with the former Soviet republics. Ukraine has limited its ties with the Commonwealth of Independent States to associate membership in the future CIS common market.

So, in the political sphere we are in between and in the economic sphere we are in between—thus, our isolated position. This is the third year of Ukraine's independence and we have come to no final decisions. Of course, you can say that Ukrainian proclamations commit the country to unarmed, non-nuclear neutrality. So you have what you wanted. However, can it be a neutral state with 52 million people? With the biggest army in Europe? It's impossible to be neutral. From the geopolitical point of view Ukraine's position of neutrality can be very dangerous, since only one region is open to us and has asked us to cooperate: the South (Turkey). If you look at the history of Ukraine, the balance of forces in our region is the balance between Russia, Poland, and Turkey. For many years, we were between two, or under Russia. But now we have a lot of questions about what to do. So I have come to ask the West, the United States and others, to help us integrate with some part of the world.

There are also positive developments in Ukraine. Unlike elsewhere in the former USSR, there has not been any bloodshed in Ukraine. Ukraine has made no territorial claims on its neighbors, not even on Moldova, which has some ancient Ukrainian territory. Ukraine is stable politically and is an important stabilizing factor for the entire region.

In Budapest, Leonid Kravchuk proposed the creation of a zone of stability and security in Eastern and Central Europe, a manifestation of Ukraine's attempt to break from its isolation. Stating that East Central Europe was welcome neither in NATO nor in the European Community, Kravchuk proposed cooperation on the basis of the Helsinki Agreement. But the Helsinki Agreement is too general. Ukraine believes that East Central European countries should develop something more specific for the region to lessen the tensions or maybe to create a



permanent structure for crisis solving. Unfortunately, many countries of East Central Europe are suspicious, not of Ukraine, but of Russia.

East Central Europe and Ukraine will be in the same boat between Russia and Germany for the foreseeable future. Russia is unpredictable, so the West should help Ukraine. The West has responsibilities.

### Gerhard Hafner

*Austrian Institute for International Politics (Laxenburg) and Professor of International Law at the University of Vienna*

First, I would like to emphasize the complexity of the Eastern European situation. International relations in these states are a mess now. The idea underlying the purpose of this conference that there exist "similar geopolitical and domestic challenges facing the countries of East Central Europe," in my opinion, has to be scrutinized. There is a certain political similarity among these states only insofar as they wish to escape the influence of the former Soviet Union. Nevertheless, even in this respect one perceives differences. I am closely following the friendship treaties between Russia and various states of East Central Europe. For example, the treaty between Russia and Slovakia, to my surprise, contains a consultation clause, which is not very far removed from the consultation clauses in the old treaties of friendship with the East European countries. On the other hand, I doubt that such consultation clauses will be included in friendship treaties with other countries of East Central Europe. In this respect, the political situation in Slovakia is different than that of its neighbors vis à vis Russia.

These states possess their own histories, cultures, and perceptions of national interests. I think, however, that there are also similarities, in particular the history they shared after World War II, which influenced and informed certain political perspectives. To some extent, this facilitates a development of similar foreign policy analysis, particularly in respect to Western economic assistance. The situation is not so much one of different national interests, but competing interests, especially in the move towards integration with Western Europe (economics, security, and culture).

On the other hand, we cannot deny the fact that nationalities and minorities could become, or have already become, a major source of conflict. Environmental problems will undoubtedly follow. In sum, we have a highly complicated situation—a few

similarities and many differences. We must judge each country on its own....

Is meaningful cooperation possible? Two impediments stand in the way of such cooperation: the national interests of the individual states and the orientation towards the European Community. Three factors force states to cooperate:

(1) Similar forms of policy analysis, namely, to develop closer ties with the EC. Here we see that they must coordinate their approach towards the EC and that the EC forces them to undertake this coordination. For example, only after the customs union was established between the Czech and Slovak republics could talks with the EC progress.

(2) East Central European countries are faced with new and common threats to their security and these threats cannot be overcome by individual states. I have in mind problems associated with migration, organized crime, drugs, and the environment.

(3) In order to overcome actual or potential conflicts in bilateral relations. To settle bilateral conflicts it is necessary to cooperate peacefully, e.g., the Nagymaros-Gabcikovo Dam conflict between Slovakia and Hungary. Both states made a fair attempt to solve the crisis peacefully and completed an agreement to that effect.

Cooperation, however, can only be effective with the participation of Western European states. With the dismantling of the Iron Curtain, Europe has not only become wider and larger, but also richer. The new Europe is exposed to more risks, it has become more vulnerable and more exposed to instability. But these risks, faced by both Eastern and Western Europe, can only be overcome if we envision a Europe that encompasses East Central European states. Splitting them apart from Western Europe, isolating them, would certainly be the wrong way to proceed.

### Karel Kovanda

*Ambassador, Permanent Mission of the Czech Republic to the United Nations*

I want to talk about three things: cooperation as being paradoxical; then cooperation with the West vs. cooperation within the region; and last mention several specific points of elaboration.

The paradox of cooperation consists of the following: on the one hand, those of us who are weaker always want to cooperate with those who are stronger. On the other hand, for cooperation to



work it has to be a positive sum game, so that even the stronger derives some benefit from cooperation.

Cooperation within the region: Central Europe wants to cooperate with Western Europe; Eastern Europe wants to cooperate with Central Europe; Russia sulks because no one is talking about cooperation with it.

The second point: just about every one of these countries is interested in cooperating with the West both along the security and economic lines. We can live without cultural cooperation. But economic cooperation and integration and security integration and cooperation with the West are crucial for the area.

How can we cooperate and to what extent do we seek cooperation among ourselves? The Czech Republic, following the leads of Poland and Hungary, will soon sign agreements with the European Community, a prime example of institutionalized cooperation with Western economic structures. Most countries are interested in military cooperation with the West both through NATO and the Western European Union. Since the Russians have agreed to allow East Central European countries to join NATO, there's no problem but to work out a schedule. True, some Russian politicians disagree, but that does not matter.

The Visegrad group (Poland, Czech and Slovak republics, and Hungary) is more economically advanced, more democratic, and more reformed than the rest of Eastern Europe. And Western Europe has found the group useful. But there were some problems. The significance and usefulness of the group was greater at the beginning of its founding in 1990-91. At the time, Visegrad symbolized the parallel personal fates of the leaders of the three countries, dissidents who were swept up to the top, who knew and understood each other. So the agreement of Visegrad was very much a result of these leaders' personal affinities. Another important aspect of Visegrad was that its members were all faced with a negative program: getting rid of the Warsaw Pact, Comecon, and Soviet troops stationed in these countries. This negative program was practically completed by the time of the Russian coup in August 1991. Comecon disintegrated; the Warsaw Pact was dismantled; and the Soviet troops left.

Where do we go from there? How do we construct a positive program for the Visegrad group? Do we integrate with the West vs. within the East? Integration within the East was something that the Czechs absolutely did not want. We were not interested in building a new Comecon, or a parallel EC

— Eastern European Community. We were not interested in building a new Warsaw Pact, maybe without the Russians, or a parallel NATO. We wanted no "NATO bis"; no "EC bis." Visegrad was fine, but we were very reluctant to institutionalize it, to create an organization out of it.

As far as the Czech Republic is concerned, we are looking for specific projects and specific areas where the cooperation of our four countries can be useful. It is not going to work across the board in every matter. We have managed to pull together a Central European Free Trade Area, which includes the four Visegrad countries. But even CEFTA has rather a long time schedule for cutting down the tariffs.

New issues are emerging that require cooperation, for example, the problem of migration. These countries must negotiate a readmission agreement, whereby one country can send back illegal immigrants to the country of origin. The threat of migration is something we are all concerned about as a potential major destabilizing factor in our countries.

East Central European Ministries of the Interior cooperate to control crime, drugs, etc. This is what we are doing. What we are not doing is creating parallel structures; we are rejecting suggestions that we cooperate in order to prove to the West that we know to cooperate. We find such suggestions patronizing.

Is meaningful cooperation possible? Yes, it is — when it serves the national interests of all who are invited to cooperate.... We are not ignoring the fact that several Eastern European countries now have neo-Communist parties in power. We in the Czech Republic are very aware of this.

The proposition that concerns similar geopolitical and domestic challenges is something that I do not understand. After all, how can you compare, say, Yugoslavia and the Czech Republic? What about the Baltics? For us, Slovenia is a world apart for the rest of Yugoslavia. Slovenia is probably the closest to the Czech Republic of all the countries that are not immediate neighbors, but we treat it absolutely separately from Yugoslavia. Outlining the borders in Eastern Europe is harder than it seems at first glance.



### **Mihai Botes**

*Ambassador, Permanent Mission of Romania to the United Nations*

I am very interested in cooperation. Romania is situated between Russia and Germany. My country has endured both German and Russian occupations.

I will focus on two issues: similarities between the countries and meaningful cooperation. Now that the countries of East Central Europe have resumed their independent political existence, they should cooperate.

Romania would like to be open to the West. The Communists were Communist nationalists, primitive nationalists, etc. The postwar history of Romania and the Ceausescu regime point to an essential difference between Romania and its neighbors in East Central Europe. Romania was not a Soviet puppet—it was a maverick. As a result, for the last twenty years no meaningful cooperation with our neighbors was possible.

Romanians would like to embrace the values of democracy and the free market, but that is only possible through cooperation. It is the only way.

### **Eduard Kukan**

*Ambassador, Permanent Mission of the Slovak Republic to the United Nations*

In the United Nations we have a regional group called "East Eastern European States." I mention this because I am confused about this "East Central Europe." Where does Slovakia belong? The West would like to leave us in the East.

The West differentiates between various countries of East Central Europe, favoring some over others. Slovakia is often overlooked. Slovakia has been left out as far as joining NATO, Western Europe, etc. The West views the Visegrad group as a party of three and not four countries. We are very much interested in keeping the Visegrad four in number and cooperating with it in the future. But the role of the group is changing. In particular, the Czechs are eager to be released from any regional obligations in order to run a lonely race toward the West.

Yes, meaningful cooperation is possible, bearing in mind all the difficulties and the conflicting national interests that exist in the region. Yes, cooperation, but... we must overcome our differences.

There are two roads for cooperation: NATO for security and EC structures for economic issues.

One way or another, we shall see that cooperation is necessary to achieve these two goals.

### **Rajan Menon**

*Lehigh University and Visiting Scholar, Harriman Institute*

Since I am not a specialist in the field, I'd like to approach the topic from the point of view of international security. Abstracted from the broader context of security, a regional discussion of East Central Europe would be meaningless. The context of this conference has arisen because of the collapse of three pillars that supported the system and had guarded the region since World War II. Pillar 1: the bipolar world order; pillar 2: a hostile dual alliance system (NATO and the Warsaw Pact); pillar 3: the collapse of the Soviet Empire.

Although these three pillars were oppressive, they were also a source of stability. That stability is gone and only NATO is left. But it's not clear whether NATO can provide security and stability for the whole of Europe. Furthermore, the case of Yugoslavia underlines NATO's limitations. There are also internal contradictions within the NATO membership concerning its expansion in the East, not least because of the possible Russian response.

East Central Europe's membership in the European Community for economic reasons is problematic and will probably take a very long time. A common agricultural policy and the funds for development are just two issues that could be sources of great antagonism.

Because of its unmanageably large membership, not even CSCE can provide security and prosperity to East Central Europe. Everyone belongs. There's a tradeoff between numbers, coherence, and operational utility. It's a vast hydra-headed and moribund entity.

Perhaps institutions should be created to manage East Central Europe, like the Baltic-Black Sea Conference, one of Ukraine's proposals. But that may not be feasible because of the members' internal contradictions and Russia's opposition. The Visegrad option should not become so coherent and strong that it is excluded from wider European structures, e.g., EC and NATO.

But what should be done when there are internal contradictions among the countries on what constitutes security: some want NATO, others CSCE, and still others Russia. Should they first deal with their internal problems and decide how the transition



from the Soviet-style systems (military and economic) should be undertaken? Too fast a transition to the free market threatens the region's stability, at least in the short run. Inflation, unemployment, and economic hardship are bound to create social ten-

sions. If East Central Europe can make the transition to the free market and democracy, security may be possible even without the creation of a new, grand institutional framework.

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